

at least 5 years before the enactment of the law, have good moral character, graduate from high school or obtain a GED, and complete 2 years of college or military service in good standing.

Having been brought by their parents to the United States as children, these young men and women know America as their home. Without question, DREAM students exemplify the best of American ideals, such as hard work, perseverance, and the desire to contribute to our Nation's workforce, economy, and civic life.

In the Rio Grande Valley of south Texas, DREAM students have excelled in school and have become valedictorians, Advanced Placement Scholars, and student leaders, despite facing difficult circumstances.

As ranking member for the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training, I have no doubt that the DREAM students can help America achieve President Obama's ambitious high school and college completion goals by the year 2020. Many of these students are working tirelessly to earn their high school and college diplomas and aspire to become professionals in the sectors of our workforce which need their talent, skills, and ingenuity.

In the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, better known as STEM, our country must train a new generation of high-skilled scientists, engineers, and mathematicians to bolster scientific discovery and spur technological innovation. Simply stated, these talented youth can help our Nation increase its global competitiveness and be the innovators of tomorrow.

Finally, it's important to note that the DREAM Act has enjoyed broad, bipartisan support from Members of Congress and Administration officials on both sides of the aisle. They include Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Former Secretary of State Colin Powell, and Carlos Gutierrez, former Secretary of Commerce under President Bush.

Chancellors and university presidents and thousands of students, civil rights groups, and prominent education, business, religious leaders, and elected officials support the DREAM Act because it is humane and sensible. It's the right thing to do.

THE PLUNDER OF COLFAX

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. In the Sierra foothills in northeastern California lies the little town of Colfax, a population of 1,800, with a median household income of about \$35,000. Over the last several years, this little town has been utterly plundered by regulatory and litigatory excesses that have pushed this little town to the edge of bankruptcy and ravaged families already struggling to make ends meet.

You see, Colfax operates a small wastewater treatment plant for its

residents that discharges into the Smathers Ravine. Because it does so, it operates within the provisions of the Clean Water Act, a measure adopted in 1972 and rooted in legitimate concerns to protect our vital water resources. The problem is that predatory environmental law firms have now discovered how to take unconscionable advantage of that law to reap windfall profits at the expense of working-class families like the townspeople of Colfax.

In the case of Colfax, an environmental law firm demanded every document pertaining to the water treatment plant from the date of its inception. It then pored over those documents looking for any possible violations, including mere paperwork errors. By law, those documents include self-monitoring reports by the water agency itself, and any violation, no matter how minor, establishes a cause of action for which the law provides no affirmative defense, even if the violation is due to factors completely beyond the local community's control, including acts of God and acts by unrelated and uncontrollable third parties. Prove one such violation—and remember, the law allows for no affirmative defense—and you've just guaranteed the attorneys all of their fees, which in this case were billed at \$550 per hour.

As a result of this predatory activity, the town of Colfax is facing legal fees alone that exceed the town's entire annual budget. Families that are struggling to keep afloat just above the poverty level are fleeced by attorneys charging \$550 an hour. But that's just part of the problem.

The law requires constant upgrading of facilities to meet ever-changing state-of-the-art regulations that have nothing to do with health and safety and with absolutely no concern for the prohibitive costs involved. In fact, Colfax is now required to discharge water certifiably cleaner than the natural stream water into which it is discharged. In Colfax's case, this required a \$15 million expenditure, divided among 800 working-class residents, who are now paying \$2,500 per year just for their water connections. And once the town has met the standard, there's no guarantee that in 5 years it won't be told, Sorry, the rules have changed and you'll need to start over.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to restore some form of rationality back to this law and to stop the plunder of small towns like Colfax. And Colfax isn't alone. Any community that operates a wastewater treatment plant is in the same jeopardy.

No one disputes that we need to maintain and enforce sensible and cost-effective protections of our precious water resources; but legitimate environmental protections must no longer be used as an excuse for regulatory extremism and litigatory plundering of our local communities.

Today, I'm introducing legislation to offer six reforms to protect other communities from going through the same nightmare as the people of Colfax:

First, to limit private-party lawsuits to issues of significant noncompliance rather than harmless paperwork errors;

Second, to shield local agencies from liability for acts that are beyond their control;

Third, to give local agencies 60 days to cure a violation before legal action can be initiated;

Fourth, to allow communities to amortize the cost of new facilities over a period of 15 years before new requirements can be heaped on them;

Fifth, to require a cost-benefit analysis before new regulations can be imposed;

Sixth, to limit attorney fees to the prevailing fees of the community.

Like many movements, the impetus for stronger environmental protection of our air and water was firmly rooted in legitimate concerns to protect these vital resources; but like so many movements, as it succeeded in its legitimate ends, it also attracted a self-interested constituency that has driven far past the borders of common sense and into the realms of political extremism and outright plunder. I'm hopeful that we're now entering an era when common sense can be restored to environmental law in this session of the Congress.

PILOT FATIGUE RULE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. HIGGINS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HIGGINS. In February 2009, tragedy struck western New York when Continental Connection Flight 3407 crashed outside of Buffalo. The National Transportation Safety Board found that one of the principal causes of the crash was pilot fatigue, so Congress passed landmark aviation legislation to reform the system.

One of the key provisions required that the Federal Aviation Administration update flight and duty time rules and set minimum rest requirements for airline pilots by August 1, 2011. Congressional intent was clear. That should have been enough time. After all, the National Transportation Safety Board had urged that pilot fatigue rules be updated for the past 20 years.

Getting it right is also about getting it done. Yet here we are today, 16 months after Congress asked the Federal Aviation Administration to issue these reforms and 4 months past the deadline we gave them, and still no pilot fatigue rule.

□ 1050

That is unacceptable to me, that is unacceptable to my colleagues from western New York, and it is unacceptable to the flying public.

I urge the Federal Aviation Administration to complete the pilot fatigue rule immediately.

KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE SAFETY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. OLSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, at a time when our Nation's economy is struggling to recover from our deepest recession in which millions of Americans are looking for work, no one would believe that we would forgo an opportunity to reduce our reliance on Middle Eastern oil and create thousands of American jobs.

Incredibly, that's exactly what happened after the White House announced they would delay decision on approval of the Keystone XL pipeline until 2013, after the elections of November 2012. At a time when our President faced a difficult choice between opposing powers within his base—labor unions and radical environmentalists—he chose to punt rather than lead.

Labor unions support construction of the Keystone XL pipeline because they understand this project has been deemed safe and will create 20,000 direct American jobs and thousands more indirect jobs across our Nation as the pipeline is built. But radical environmentalists and Hollywood activists vehemently oppose the project. In fact, they surrounded the White House in protest of the Keystone XL pipeline, claiming that the project is not environmentally safe. While these protesters made catchy headlines, their claims about the Keystone XL pipeline simply aren't true.

The Keystone XL project has been studied extensively for over 3 years, when TransCanada originally filed an application for a Presidential permit with the Department of State. The Presidential permit review process was conducted by the State Department, the Environmental Protection Agency, and many other agencies within the Federal Government. After 3 years of comprehensive review and several changes to the project to accommodate environmental concerns, the final report to the White House incorporated 57 project-specific special conditions for the design, construction and operation of the Keystone XL pipeline. In simple terms, the Keystone XL pipeline was designed to be the safest pipeline the world has ever known.

Here's the truth why the Keystone XL pipeline promises to be the safest pipeline ever. As proposed, the Keystone XL pipeline will be monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year with the most advanced technologies. It will be buried at a deeper depth than similar pipelines to minimize risk. It will utilize multiple leak detection methods and failsafe shutoff systems, as well as having an emergency response program in place ready to respond if needed.

Critics of the project further claim that the crude transported by the Keystone XL pipeline is highly corrosive “toxic sludge.” This is a claim that can only come out of Hollywood, with no facts to support it. Independent analysis and sound science have determined these oils are not corrosive to steel. Canadian oil is already shipped safely across the United States via other Ca-

nadian pipelines. Good old-fashioned common sense tells us that no company would try to destroy its own interest by spending billions to construct a pipeline system that is going to be eaten up by the very products it transports.

I'll wrap up my comments with the facts about the Keystone XL pipeline. This project has been exhaustively studied and revised to ensure its safety. Three years of grueling review and detailed analysis by multiple Federal Government agencies have concluded that construction and use of the Keystone pipeline is safe. In August, our Department of State recommended that President Obama approve the Keystone XL pipeline.

Our economy is still teetering on recession. It needs to be strengthened; and we need a safe, reliable supply of energy to grow it. Canada can provide it. They want to provide it, thereby reducing our reliance on Middle Eastern oil and strengthening our national security because we have energy security as a result.

Thousands of new jobs will be created to build this pipeline. Mr. Speaker, I urge the President to approve the Keystone XL pipeline now.

EXTENDING UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RANGEL. My colleagues, I once again rise asking that we immediately consider extending the Federal Unemployment Compensation Act.

It seems as though I walked into this movie before, last year, and we were begging once again that we throw away the labels of being Democrat or Republican and reach out to make an appeal as to what makes this country different from other countries.

This is the only country in the world that no one wants to leave and everyone wants to come in. And it's not because of the differences we have with the rich and the poor. It's that always in this country we extended hope. We allowed people to believe that they were never really truly alone. And then we find a circumstance that Americans, hardworking Americans are trying to fulfill that American Dream—once again not to become a Wall Street broker, and certainly not to be living a life of poverty, but to join that middle class that has been the engine for hope and economic advancement for our country. And we find this situation now that, through no fault of their own, these dreams have been shattered. People have not only lost their jobs, but they've lost their self-esteem, they've lost their savings, they have not been able to send their kids to college.

And so what is it that we can do since it's abundantly clear that in this Congress there is a gridlock? And we don't want you to lose hope because

there's things that Americans can do. It's not just waiting for this Congress to act, because you hold in your hands the power to control this Congress. And we should not have to wait until next year in order to say that you can express yourself at the polls. No indeed.

Every Member of Congress—435 of us here—are anxiously waiting for your call, and I hope that call would be a call of compassion. It should be a call from our ministers, from our Catholics and Protestants and Jews and synagogues and Mormons and Muslims saying that in America we should not have the vulnerable carrying the pain of mistakes that have been made. We should be hearing from our civic leaders and our voters and calling Republicans, Democrats, and Independents saying we did not send you to Washington to display just what a good Republican you are or what a good Democrat you are.

We should talk about this sign up here, “In God We Trust.” Doesn't that mean something about taking care of the vulnerable, the unemployed, those without homes, without jobs and without hope? Doesn't it mean that we have a tradition as Members of Congress? And doesn't it mean that our voters have a responsibility not to just say how bad we are, but to say how good they are for making certain that they're monitoring our conduct, not through a poll, but through our action.

The question is, How did your Congressman vote on extending unemployment compensation?

□ 1100

Rather than wait for the good or bad news, call now. Call today. Call every day this week.

They'll never have a Thanksgiving or a Christmas that they used to have, but they can't give up hope. They can't give in and they can't give up.

So I am saying for America, you don't have to go and protest, even though I appreciate the fact that these courageous men and women are doing it. You don't have to walk those civil rights marches. But you can at least get in touch with your Member of Congress, remind him or her of their constitutional responsibility, and remind them of their moral responsibility to the vulnerable among us, the sick, the aged, the unemployed, those that played by the rules, and we know have nothing to do with the situation they find themselves in economically.

We can make a change, but it's going to take the American people to come together and say they're mad as hell and they're not going to take it anymore.

So let's make an appeal that America takes the Congress back. Direct not ourselves to do things in order to get reelected but direct we do things because it's the right thing to do.